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ABSTRACT

This document, which is designed to assess the political realities for lifelong learning in Great Britain in the 1990s, contains five papers. The introductory papers, "Editor's Preface" (Nick Small) and "Foreword" (Richard Hoggart), set the stage for the remaining three papers and present a brief overview of their contents and scope. "The Learning Society: Rhetoric and Reality in 1992" (Frank Molyneux) analyzes the standing of lifelong education in the preelection policy papers of Great Britain's Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat parties. John Taylor's paper "Lifelong Learning and the Election Campaign" examines the extent to which continuing education figured in media coverage of Great Britain's last election campaign. Finally, "The Language of Priorities" (Gerry Fowler) reviews education and training provision in a broader context, with special attention to the gaps between party policies and the developments needed in lifelong learning and continuing education for adults. Appended are excerpts from the Conservative Party, Labour Party, and Liberal Democrat Party manifestos pertaining to education and training. Also included are brief profiles of the authors and lists of the principles on which the Association for Lifelong Learning (ALL) is based, the ALL's primary objectives, and selected ALL publications. (MN)

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association for lifelong learning

The Learning Society: Political Rhetoric and Electoral Reality

papers by
Gerry Fowler
Frank Molyneux
John Taylor

edited by
Nick Small

foreword by
Richard Hoggart

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Editor's Preface

Nick Small

This substantial pamphlet is the first publication of the Association for Lifelong Learning. The Association is the successor body to the Association for Recurrent Education, which itself produced many publications (see page 60).

The aim of this first of ALL's publication output is to assess political realities for lifelong learning in the 1990s. The commitments of the three main political parties are examined as at the April 1992 general election. Richard Hoggart's Foreword is typically incisive, and presents us with the task of educating our political masters in all parties. Frank Molyneux then looks extensively at pre-election policies and promises; John Taylor records how far continuing education featured in the election campaign - a regrettably short piece; and Gerry Fowler reviews education and training provision in a wider context, reflecting on the parties' omissions and differences, and the elements that were overlooked or ignored. The education and training sections of the manifestos of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties are reproduced verbatim in an Appendix as a valuable aide memoire.

A L L

A welcome is extended to all those in the broad field of lifelong, continuing, adult, post-compulsory, etc, etc education to join ALL. This is an area in the midst of the radical reform of the national approach to education. Yet, too often, real change is brought about by oversight as much as design. Information about membership is given on page 59.

ALL publications are designed to promote well informed debate on the case for the lifelong dimension in future educational provision. Consequently we see this publication as being the first of many. If you want to discuss, or have items for, publication, please get in touch with Nick Small, ALL Publications Secretary, Open University, Fairfax House, Merrion Street, Leeds LS2 8JU, telephone 0532-444431.

Foreword

Richard Hoggart

Two assertions above all have to be made about the need for lifelong education: that open democracies must have critically-literate citizens, but that far too many people in Britain are sub-literate (and that the technically highly trained are often, as citizens, also sub-literate).

How far do the three main political parties grasp these crucial points? Once we have fought through the thickets of plastic verbiage in their manifestos, which are reprinted and very usefully analysed here, we see that the grasp is, if not very strong, firmest in the Liberal Democrats, modest in the Labour Party and hardly existent among the Conservatives.

Outside direct government circles there are of course some Conservatives who see the point; and presumably so do some officials at the Department for Education. But look at a typical publication - the recent White Paper on Further Education - to realise how little influence such people now have in the circles of power. Instead, there is here all the dreary litany of rat-trap, fashionable phrases: 'market-oriented courses', 'demand-led provision' and the rest. Worst of all is a sly division, an ill-found divisiveness; between provision which is vocational, commercial, industrial and the rest. As to the rest - which must include studies in the humane disciplines, in all aspects of citizenship, in the nature of the good social and individual life - all that is caught, diminished, thrown to the outer fringes as 'leisure provision'. It is a deeply illiterate demarcation, but typical of the Nineties.

The overwhelming first need is therefore to educate our political masters; in all parties.

The Learning Society: Rhetoric and Reality in 1992

Frank Molyneux

In 1988 the Association for Recurrent Education (ARE) published a collection of twenty-nine essays under the title **Learning for Life: politics and progress in Recurrent Education**. The present writer, with Gerry Fowler and George Low, edited and contributed to the seminal work **Recurrent Education: a plea for lifelong learning** (Ward Locke 1974) which helped to launch ARE. Twenty years ago we had all three accepted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) view that recurrent education was an urgently required strategical concept. ARE was founded to promote much more than an amalgam of the ideas behind loosely used terms such as education permanente, lifelong learning and continuing education. In the late 1960s and early 70s these terms had been introduced into different national contexts to imply the need for increased educational opportunities for all individuals after the end of required or extended schooling.

Continuing education, even then, was associated in the UK with supplying some additional education, training or retraining to enhance an individual's employability. Lifelong learning was more widely used in North America and had perhaps the broadest implication for the integration of provision from a variety of sources at the post compulsory level. ARE preferred the term recurrent education at that time because to the 200 or so enthusiasts in the Association it stressed the need for a new paradigm, "a shift in the current constellation of beliefs, values and technologies" concerning educational need and provision. Prior to the 'Great Debate' and well before the arrival of education and training as central planks in all party political platforms, ARE believed that this country could no longer afford more "tinkering with what exists by those who have no clear idea of what might exist". We argued in 1988 that:

> **The central difficulty with the implementation of a system of recurrent education is that it postulates a wholly new way of looking at the educational needs of each person throughout his or her life . . . It denies the domination of childhood education, or the 'apprenticeship model' as the most complete preparation for life, work and retirement . . . Yet the Minister of whatever party, along with the majority of those who advise him (or her) and who provide the information on which that advice is based, is primarily concerned with the**

> **management and improvement of what exists. Concern lies with what is, and what it might with better effort become, rather with an alternative, better suited to the needs of a new century and new millenium.**

Four years later, the Association for Lifelong Learning (ALL) has succeeded ARE with a title which in the 90s clearly has more popular meaning and appeal. It has been born into a general election year which might well prove a political watershed for our national system of education as we approach the 21st century. Consequently, in its first approach to a wider audience, ALL examines the political realities after 13 years of Conservative government which has passed four radical Education Acts since 1979 and urgently pressed two equally contentious Bills through the final days of the pre-election session. It cannot be doubted that education and training are higher on the political agenda than for many years. Interest in the wider view promoted by ALL is clearly greater. Party position papers refer to the 'Learning Society' as an implied goal and can be assumed to reflect a wider concern in so doing. What is the substance of such a view?

By 1990, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) was applying its not inconsiderable resources and influence to an investigation of the concept of lifelong learning and its prospects of achievement. In October of that year, it established an enquiry under the leadership of Sir Christopher Ball into 'The Learning Society - the role of post-compulsory education and training'. It defined the Learning Society as:

> **. . . one in which everyone participates in education and training throughout their life. It would support them as citizens, in their employment and leisure. A Learning Society would also make provision to match these enhanced aspirations.**

It summarised the problems and possibilities by means of 'vicious' and 'virtuous' socio-economic circles reminiscent of the simple, graphical models applied to analyses of first and third world contrasts in the 70s. In these, contemporary Britain is trapped in the vicious circles of low investment, productivity and profits linked by poor education and training to a work-force with low wages, little job satisfaction and inadequate educational aspiration. In the brave new 21st century world of the learning society, the virtuous circles link and sustain high standards of education, training and skills with high job satisfaction, greater individual learning expectations and a more successful and competitive economy.

The RSA team argues, as have the advocates of recurrent education for

over 20 years, that the learning society will not result simply from government policy and legislation (though these must provide the foundation) but by a wider recognition and commitment across society. RSA's focus is on post-compulsory education and training (PCET), viz. all formal education and training for those over 16, provided full and part time in thousands of institutions and centres currently offering about 1,400 qualifications (some of which RSA provides).

Thus, in seeking to identify targets essential to the development of the learning society, the RSA is concerned essentially with a revised approach to PCET:

- Achievement of at least 80 per cent staying on at 16+.
- Achievement of National Vocational Qualification Level Three, eg. BTEC National or 2+ A-levels by at least 60 per cent of 18 year olds.
- Achievement of at least 50 per cent participation in PCET at 18+.
- Greatly increased formal education or training for those in employment (70 per cent of the late 1980s workforce had received none over the previous three years).

1991 saw the RSA interim report **Learning Pays**, and early in 1992 this was followed by the final summary, **Profitable Learning**. The latter appears to show some interesting progression of thinking. The central focus on 16-19 remains but there is now a greater emphasis on the more general aim of achieving participation and attainment targets for all ages in terms of lifelong goals: for example, 50 per cent participation in higher education by 2001. The visionary stance is clear and welcome:

> **The creation of a learning society depends upon the recognition that everyone is capable of benefiting from continuing their learning throughout life.**

However, not everyone will so readily identify with RSA's apparently uncritical acceptance of the current commercial style and competitive ethos in education. Some will continue to ask about the values of such a learning society and the balance within it between consumerism and caring. They will be curious, even sceptical, about its capacity to persuade those who have had least from compulsory education of the potential benefits of lifelong learning to them. Hard experience of life in, say, an inner city ethnic neighbourhood may well cause many to doubt their automatic admission to comfortable Britain on the basis of improved qualifications. Nonetheless, one would wish to agree with Professor Asher Cashdan (**Education**, February 21 1992) in suggesting

that it would do no harm to ask our general election candidates about their reactions to **Profitable Learning's** 10 point action plan, viz:

- Ambitious longer-term targets for learning.
- New funding system for providers of education and training.
- Incentives for company investment in employee training.
- Legislation to control youth labour market.
- Incentives to individuals to continue and improve their learning.
- Creation of unified Department of Education and Training.
- Establishment of new Qualifications Authority.
- New, improved approach to careers education and guidance.
- Creation of National Foundation for Learning.
- Organisation of a Learning Year in 1994.

It is against such a heightened awareness and promotion of the general concept of lifelong learning that we examine the policies of the principal political parties as they move into position for the 1992 general election.

The Conservative Party

Clearly, we have much working evidence of Conservative Party principles and practice from the legislation of the past thirteen years. Not since the 1950s has a party had such an unbroken opportunity to shift the direction and form of our national system of education and training. There is arguably less need for position papers and policy statements in such a situation and indeed our attempts to secure such material from Smith Square has borne much less fruit than our approaches to the two principal opposition parties.

Let us examine the basic legislative facts for evidence as to Conservative awareness of and subscription to the principles of lifelong learning as a basis for a re-casting of the national educational mould. The main provisions and proposals are:

Education Act 1979

- Removal of 1976 Education Act compulsion on LEAs and governors of grammar schools to reorganise along comprehensive lines.

Education (No2) Act 1980

- Schools normally to have own governing body with two elected parents and two elected teachers.
- Parents to have statutory right to express preference for child's place of education.
- Establishment of assisted places scheme to pay fees at designated independent schools for parents unable to do so.
- LEAs to have more discretion in setting prices of school meals.

Education Reform Act 1988

- Introduction of national curriculum, attainment targets and standardised testing at 7, 11, 14 and 16.
- Introduction of local school management, with control of school-budgets, including appointment of staff, passing to governing bodies.
- Introduction of opportunity for schools to acquire grant maintained status after an election by parents to opt out of local authority control.
- Removal of polytechnics and larger colleges from LEA control to become free standing bodies, with governors to include representatives of industry and commerce.
- University Funding Council replaces University Grants Committee
- City Technology Colleges (CTCs) established outside LEA control, run by independent bodies linked with industry and business.

Education (Student Loans) Act 1990

- Introduction of loans scheme to supplement higher education grants.

Education (Schools) Act 1992

- Parents to receive written report at least annually on pupils' progress; this to include examination and test results and comparisons with national performance indicators.
- Annual report on school performance required from governors to include levels of attendance and destinations of leavers.
- LEAs to produce league tables with raw data on school performance.
- New national schools inspectorate to substantially replace present

HM Inspectors; teams of inspectors, including private, to compete for contracts which schools are required to award.

Education (Further and Higher Education) Act 1992

- Some 450 and 113 sixth form colleges, with not less than 60 per cent of their students receiving full-time education, eligible to leave LEA control and receive corporate status.
- Functions of LEAs reduced with redefinition of 1944 Education Act duties, so that LEA responsiblity for adult education is predominantly for 'non vocational' provision.
- Further Education Funding Councils and Higher Education Funding Councils set up in England and Wales.
- Colleges required to publish results including destinations of leavers.
- Polytechnics and larger colleges of higher education may become universities and award own degrees.
- Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) to be abolished.

In 1991, reviewing over a decade of Conservative achievement and anticipating the opportunity for further changes in the 90s, the Prime Minister re-affirmed the Party's commitment to education under its new leadership:

> . . . **at the top of my personal agenda for the 1990s is education . . . My objectives are straightforward - improving quality and standards.** (John Major, Young Conservatives' Conference, Scarborough, February 9 1991).

Of course, such broad aims are unexceptionable and could have been heard in similar terms at any party conference. However, the Party's stated operational objectives in the early 1990s begin to distinguish the perceptions, values and priorities behind past and proposed change in education given a Conservative government:

> **The central objectives of the Government's education policies are:**
>
> **- to raise standards for all our children;**
>
> **- to increase parental choice;**
>
> **- to make further and higher education more widely accessible and more responsive to the needs of the economy; and**
>
> **- to achieve the best possible return from the large resources we invest in education.**

It seems to some degree inevitable that, in our traditional two party conflict style and system of government, party policies will be much influenced by what are perceived as the flaws or evils of the alternative philosophy and previous regimes. This clearly applies to the educational thinking of the 'new right'. Reviewing what is termed the educational 'inheritance', the Conservatives saw themselves with a mission to remedy "long-standing problems in education". These, they believe, result from Labour's alleged aversion to diversity and choice, denial of parental or consumer influence, the forcing of individual schools into a comprehensive system regardless of their wishes and general financial mismanagement leading to cuts and unfulfilled expectations.

Thus they saw an urgent need throughout the 1980s "to give the education system a new sense of direction and purpose based on Conservative principles". These were epitomised in the legislation reviewed above, particularly in the 1988 Education Reform Act which few would dispute was "the most important and wide ranging since 1944". The Conservative achievement is summarised by the Party as giving:

-more power to parents and head teachers;

-more freedom to schools to spend their money as they wish, and the chance to break free from local authority control if that is the democratic choice of parents;

-a balanced and rigorous education to pupils through the introduction of a National Curriculum for the first time in our history;

-and new opportunities to our colleges, polytechnics and universities to develop and expand.

There is also a major emphasis on "educating for the world of work" with the Party attaching much importance to "closer links between school and industry". It is pointed out that £70 million was provided to fund such links in 1988-89 and that a DES survey in 1990 found that 90 per cent of secondary schools and over half of primary had links with local businesses. This accompanies an explicit stress on the greater development of vocational education so that:

-every young person should either be in full-time education, or in a job with time off for good quality training;

-every young person who does not go on to higher education should achieve a recognised vocational qualification or its equivalent, with greater numbers achieving higher levels of qualification.

Specific initiatives in this field are listed as:

- The Technical and Vocatonal Education Initiative (TVEI) which it is claimed "helps prepare 14-18 year olds better for working life" and is currently being extended nation wide.
- The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) - "a course taken after the end of compulsory schooling and designed to help pupils find out more about work which might suit them and to prepare them for that work".
- The National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) established in 1986 "to reform the British system of work-related qualifications, which clearly need to be rationalised. The NCVQ's three main aims are:

  - to provide opportunities for greater numbers of people to obtain qualifications in order to increase our economic competitiveness;

  - to produce more consistent standards throughout the system;

  - to bridge the divide between 'academic' and vocational qualifications".

How do the Conservatives see their achievements and aspirations with regard to the post school sector?

> **There has been steady increase in resources; a much-needed restructuring of the funding system . . . student numbers have increased significantly; and standards have improved.**

In terms of sectors, institutions and representation, they point to:

- Further education colleges benefiting from delegated budgets and the inclusion of businessmen and other members of the local community on their governing bodies. The prospects for greater institutional autonomy following current legislation (see above) which will remove them from LEA control and bring direct government financing via the Funding Councils.
- Newly independent polytechnics and colleges freed from LEA control being run more efficiently as higher education corporations with boards of governors again more representative of the business world. It is claimed that the polytechnics are "one of the country's major success stories under the Conservative Governments", whose intakes of students increased by 47 per cent in the 1980s compared with three per cent in the universities.

- Universities receiving much higher income "because of their success in attracting funds from other sources. In 1988-9 about 27.5 per cent of universities total income came from private sources compared with 8.6 per cent in 1980-81 . . . Government funds have fallen as a proportion of universities' total income - from 61.8 per cent in 1983 to 55 per cent in 1986-7".
- Increased student numbers in higher education at large.

> By 1989 there were over 283,000 more students in higher education than when the Party came to power; some 1,061,000 in total, an increase of 36 per cent. . . . Since 1979, the proportion of 18-19 year olds entering higher education institutions has increased from one in eight to one in five . . . There has been an encouraging rise in the participation of under-represented groups . . . The number of full-time women students . . . has risen from 42 to 46 per cent since 1979. The number of mature students has risen to over 200,000 since 1979, an increase of 55 per cent.

There is also a recognition of the problem of adult literacy and a reference to an estimated 13 per cent of adults with some literacy and numeracy difficulties. This is regarded as common to many industrialised countries and it is noted that "one in five young people have problems in the USA and one in four in Canada" (presumably with basic skills). Specific initiatives are cited including grants to the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) of over £3 million in 1990 and the sixty-five Open Learning Centres opened by LEAs in England.

As to the future the Conservative vision is premised on fundamental doubts concerning past practice in general and the Robbins Principle in particular.

> it is far from clear that the system of free higher education and lavish student support at the taxpayer's expense has opened up opportunities and increased access, on the large scale that was originally envisaged. It could be argued that the existing system helps to sustain an approach to the provision of higher education which actually tends to restrict opportunity and access.

This is linked to the Government's "growing dissatisfaction with the traditional understanding of its funding role and its relationship with higher education" and leads to a "Conservative vision for higher education over the next 25 years (which) cannot be realised without major changes". These are summarised as:

- Doubling of student numbers.
- Increasing access for people from all backgrounds.
- Flexibility of institutions - these must become "more market-oriented

and more responsive to the demands of their customers - the students".

- Public spending and higher education - the problems of changing demography, an ageing population with greater financial demands which must require a reconsideration of the previously unquestioned spending on higher education.
- Maintaining standards - courses must "remain attractive and worthwhile to (more) potential students who may wish to take them".

The newly introduced student loans scheme is seen as central to these perceived requirements for a radical reconsideration of Government's role in promoting greater and more cost effective learning by adults - at least in what is currently defined as higher education.

> **The scheme is designed to save money on student support in the long run, but with the clear intention of enabling more people in future to enter higher education. This can be achieved most effectively by diverting funds from expensive student support to the universities and polytechnics themselves. It is estimated that the scheme could save £200 million per annum on student support by 2015.**

Similarly, the proposed shift of institutional resources from grants to fees is part of the same strategy to:

> **. . . increase the independence of universities and polytechnics by making them less reliant on central block grants; encourage them to improve teaching and increase their popularity by making their income more dependent on their ability to satisfy student demand, and help to increase student numbers, by encouraging higher education institutions to exploit spare capacity and take in more students.**

The increase in the numbers of foreign students in the 80s following the requirement in 1980 that they would pay full fees is cited as an "encouraging precedent", with the universities believed to have made themselves more attractive and accessible to overseas students and to be reaping the reward in "substantially increased income in an area free from central government interference".

Is it possible to summarise objectively the beliefs which have given rise to the Conservative educational principles listed at the beginning of this section?

It would seem clear that in essence they are those which underpin Conservative economic and social policies at large - namely a profound faith in the power of financial competition and the private initiative and

energy it is believed to release. The corollary is an equally fervent rejection of public corporations shielded from the rigours of competition. Both tenets unite in a determination to control public expenditure from the centre as an alternative to the dangers of local authority profligacy and waste. The result has been a heady brew of new legislation which has significantly altered the distribution of power and control in publicly funded education and training. The analogy with the market has been vigorously pursued in education at all levels and the language of business management seems firmly established. It is more difficult to reach conclusions as to the extent to which the Conservative faith in private entrepreneurship in education has to date been accepted by practitioners at large.

In the final days of the third consecutive Conservative government, the Schools Bill and the Further and Higher Education Bill were rushed through Parliament, the latter without the acceptance of a single amendment - including those from its own benches. This meant that the cross party concerns about the form of post 16 provision and the future of adult education went unheeded. To many, it appeared that the determination to reduce further the power of LEAs by removing the colleges from their control took precedence over all else.

Similarly, the Party's decision to release its policy paper **Better Schools Better Standards** a day before its full manifesto (17 March) reflected the importance attached to education policies in the election campaign. These are widely believed to emanate from strongly held personal views by Mrs Thatcher's successor. John Major is reported as saying that the so called '39 steps' in the policy paper would lift standards, open up choice and "revolutionise our education system over the next few years". In fact, most of the policies in the document were not new. The main thrust was to re-affirm the Conservatives' belief in more grant maintained schools, to enable more money to go to schools judged successful and popular, and to re-emphasise the 'back to basics' drive in primary schools.

There can be little doubt, however, that Conservative Government policy in the 80s and the Party's intentions for the 1990s represent a sea change in the operating climate since ARE's foundation in the early 70s.

Labour Party Policy for the 1990s

The long, unbroken period of Conservative government and the radical

legislative changes summarised above have inevitably much exercised the theorists of the major opposition party. Again we might seek for statements of belief and principle before examining the practical policies proposed by a prospective Labour Government in the 1990s.

Though it has for some time been fashionable in the media to talk of policy convergence between the Conservatives led by Margaret Thatcher's successor, John Major, and the purged and restructured Labour Party which emerged under Neil Kinnock, there is little difficulty in identifying the profound differences in educational values between the two.

It is true that both have chosen to place education and training high upon their list of election issues. Again, the leader's rhetoric makes the point:

> **Education and training are now the commanding heights of the economy. We must mobilise all of the available abilities. And I mean all. We need an economy and a society of all talents.** (Neil Kinnock, October 4 1989)

However, a further quotation from the final report of Labour's Policy Review for the 1990s succinctly points up the contrasting values:

> **Education is central to the quality of individual's lives, the establishment of moral values, the functioning of society and the prosperity of the nation. Everyone in our society is entitled, as a right, without regard to their family background, income, sex, race or religion. The long term needs of the individual and society, not the short term needs of particular industries, should be the prime consideration.**

The last sentence reflects a long term opposition sensitive to the perceived changes in the value climate during the radical changes of the 80s. However, the previous and primary references to social and moral values, and the search for equity point to familiar ground. The significance of other elements in the statement of principle are a matter of judgement. One notes the early linking of education to national prosperity and in the next paragraph the qualification of the equity stance:

> **Equality reqires that every child and adult be treated as of equal worth. We do not expect or want everyone to be the same. We DO want every child to have similar chances in life, so that it can live its life to the full. It is not, however, enough to accept that education is a right, not a privilege. We have to define the entitlements for which the community should pay, guarantee their delivery and monitor the quality of what is provided.**

It is clear that the stress on individual entitlement is tightly linked to the

notion of a cost to the community. The public will be required to pay but is entitled to effective quality control. Value for money could presumably be substituted had not the phrase been so well used elsewhere!

The statement of Labour Party objectives in education reminds us of these broader aims and again links economic success with social improvement. They are described as ambitious but essential "if we are to provide better life chances, develop a more competitive economy and create a fairer society".

- Increased national competency via extended participation at all levels.
- Fostering of peoples' critical co-operative and creative capacities as the basis for participative democracy.
- Increased efficiency and flexibility of educational institutions with extension of opportunities for the least advantaged.
- Unification of education and training, integration of academic and vocational, and greater linkage between stages of education.
- Development of a "national culture in which individuals and enterprises recognise the benefits of updating knowledge and skills throughout life".
- Introduction of the philosophy of "education through life" and development of entitlements to time off for education and training.

The Labour Party's anticipation of 'The challenge of the next millenium' is somewhat reminiscent of RSA's vision of a virtuous learning society:

> **The education system must rapidly adapt to dramatic changes as we approach the next century. The 15-29 age group will fall by almost three million by the year 2000, offering a golden opportunity to open up further and higher education to more people, to retrain the existing workforce and people entering the labour market. The 45-65 age group will increase by about two million, many of them wanting to improve their knowledge and skills.**

What of the specific proposals to bring the above about following the major changes wrought by the Conservatives since 1979? These can be summarised as follows:

- 'A new partnership.' Labour believes that the 1988 Act denies local choice because of an increase in central government control. It aims for a new shared relationship between government, LEAs and parents, teachers and governors. It appears to accept local school management provided it is "more effective and responsive to

community needs". Central to this would be the 'Home School Partnership Agreement' based on the view of parents as 'co-partners'. This appears to extend the Conservative requirement for school prospectuses and the publication of examination results to the possibility of written agreements between individual parents and schools. These are premised on the universal adoption of records of achievement and published results based on the 'value added' concept.

- 'Teacher quality.' Labour's search for good teaching as "the key to good education" would appear to turn on the possible establishment of a General Teaching Council to "determine, enforce and enhance professional standards". It would involve teachers, training institutions and "the community at large" and would ensure "a higher degree of external accountablity" for teaching standards. Reformed initial training would involve designated schools with a system of trained teacher tutors. Improved teacher supply would reduce average class size.

- 'National curriculum and assessment.' Here the basic concept of a "nationally agreed framework for the curriculum within which . . . learning entitlements can be guaranteed" seems accepted. However, the Conservative version linked to "competitive testing at 7, 11, 14 and 16" is rejected as a "strait-jacket on knowledge". Particular mention is made of curriculum in the later years of secondary education which "must relate to their future education, training and employment opportunities". Assessment is seen as turning on records of achievement "recording every pupil's progress through primary and secondary school" and a "mixed economy" of continuous assessment, formal examinations and diagnostic tests.

- 'Education after sixteen.' Labour's aim for what it sees as a crucial sector in terms of increased participation is "a co-ordinated comprehensive provision for those who continue full-time study at school or college or enter a traineeship". The basis would be a Higginson Report style five subject A level examination and a National Vocational Council to make available a system of credits and qualifications. These would be available to those in full time study and those on the proposed four year traineeship modelled on the acclaimed West German system.

- 'Higher and continuing education.' Labour's use of the term 'continuing' is a distinguishing feature. It shares with the Conservatives the

aim of much increased participation in higher education (doubling over 20 years) but also has much to say on improving access. Institutions would be required to produce admission profiles "to identify inequalities and monitor progress in reducing them". Those opening up access to a wider range of students would have priority for additional funds. The student loan scheme is rejected "because of its detrimental effects on access, its high cost and distortion of student course choices." Grants with reviewed parental contributions and independence for the married and over 21s is preferred.

- Most radical from the lifelong perspective is the proposed 'Return to Learn Entitlement'. Labour explicitly acknowledges the importance of education for the over 50s and promises more help to adult education centres, residential colleges, extra mural departments, the Open University and the U3A (University of the Third Age). It then offers the prospect of funding for one year full time study (or part-time equivalent) to those of this age group who would qualify within a means tested, pre-budgeted scheme operated on a 'first come-first served' basis.
- Student rights to representation and a new system of staff tenure are also envisaged but the theme of cost effectiveness completes the proposed package with the proposal for a Higher and Continuing Education Council. This would replace the existing funding councils and 'advise government on policy in respect of the whole of post eighteen education'. Quality control and accountablilty are seen as central with investment promised in "improved arrangements for inspection, appraisal and staff development".

The Liberal Democrats

Again there is no doubting the central importance of education and training in the party's future vision. Unusually, however, the Liberal Democrats acknowledge that they have no prerogative in the realm of political concern for education:

> **Education and training are at the centre of political debate in Britain. Irrespective of party, politicians recognise that the deficiencies in Britain's education and training provision are limiting national prosperity, restricting young people's life prospects, and threatening the country's social development and cohesion.** (Making Government Work - The Constitution and Education, 1991).

However, they would doubtless argue that, while sharing this concern

and agreeing that "our education system must equip our children to prosper in an increasingly competitive world", their stance is distinctive in linking the prospects for improvement centrally with their determination to secure constitutional reform. Also, their practical policies are unique in that they would be prepared to increase public spending. "We are prepared to make this investment even if it means a penny on income tax."

It is difficult to deny that the Liberal Democrats have a distinctive view of the context and origins of national educational problems. These are seen as an inevitable facet of what is termed 'Britain's Constitutional Deficit'. They point out that educational policy has always been centrally formulated and largely determined by two political parties diametrically opposed on key issues. Governments once elected need not consult either with other parties or those professionally concerned. They believe "the educational bureaucracy in London is largely anonymous, secretive and accountable to ministers alone". They are not inclined to accuse their opponents of complacency about education:

> **Both have well developed critiques, passionately held by their protagonists. For the Conservatives, Britain's educational weakness is typically related to broad cultural facets: an "anti-industrial spirit" on the one hand, and the prevailing strength of a supposedly introverted and left wing establishment on the other . . . For Labour, by contrast, it is all down to inadequate state funding and central planning, with (from some quarters) attacks on an elitism which supposedly threatens equality of opportunity for the great majority.**

The Liberal Democrats believe there has been a persistent national failure to educate and train the whole population adequately. This is seen as a long standing problem "and cannot be divorced from the political system which generated that failure in the first place". They consider that the system is too remote and centralised to permit sufficient choice and experiment in educational policy. While accepting that "market mechanisms undoubtedly have a greater role to play in education than has hitherto been allowed", they reject the view that education is intrinsically a private rather than a public good and such mechanisms the best available for improving practice and performance. They insist that the state will, inevitably and necessarily, retain a major role in education but that its political structures and processes must be reformed as a prerequisite to the solution of our educational ills:

> **. . . if our democracy were rendered more open and efficient, executive power made more contestable, and the opportunities for the trying and testing of competing policies expanded . . . then the quality of government could be**

> expected to improve - and not least the quality of provision of national, state regulated services.

Thus, the Liberal Democrats educational principles and policies need to be seen in the context of this over-arching tenet of faith. They perceive improved and extended education as "a prerequisite for the more flexible, equal and open society which Liberal Democrats seek". This is made explicit in the final Liberal Democrat publication devoted to education and training prior to the 1992 General Election - **Time to Learn**. Here the commitment to increase income tax if need be to fund the changes is repeated. In addition, the Liberal Democrats proposed budget in March 1992 promises £5.5 billion to pre-school, college and adult education and training.

> The truth is we cannot afford NOT to invest in education . . . We want to destroy once and for all the assumption that education ends at 16, 19 or at the very latest 21. It is never too late to benefit from education and we will make it an opportunity for many, not a privilege for a few.

The conclusion to the same document also uses the language of the RSA reports:

> Liberal Democrat education policy is designed to take Britain into the 21st century as a Learning Society. We want a society in which our citizens' hopes and aspirations can be realised. By extending the chance of education to many more under five year olds, 16-19 year olds and adults, we hope to liberate the potential of each individual.

What of their key priorities in this integrated process of educational improvement and constitutional reform? They are detailed in a 15 point Liberal Democrat Education Guarantee. In summary they are:

- A single department of education and training and the resources necessary to ensure an adequate school infrastructure and a high quality teaching profession.
- Further development and improvement of local school and college management with funding of actual, not average, teacher salaries.
- A streamlined role for LEAs as enablers rather than providers.
- A guarantee of pre-school provision for all three and four year olds.
- A National Record of Achievement for all from pre-school to 18 to replace standard tests.
- Broadening of A level curriculum and ultimately a single qualification structure via a National Qualifications Council within a five year entitlement for the 14-19 group based on a single system of

modular courses.

- Establish an independent General Teaching Council to control professional entry and standards and ensure best training practice.
- New opportunities for adult education and training, particularly through more part-time, open and distance learning course provision and by providing fees for a period of education, starting with those who would benefit most, such as the long term unemployed and single parents.
- Doubling of number of students in higher education and widening access through more flexible courses, funding fees for part-time students and more distance learning. Also, a new fee structure in higher education with fees following students to ensure greater institutional responsiveness especially to mature students.
- Students over 18 to be regarded as economically independent with income entitlement and student benefit allowance to reduce financial barriers to greater participation in further learning.
- A more flexible credit and modular based system of courses in higher education with qualifications after two, three and four years study (or equivalent) and more part-time study opportunities.

Party Priorities

After the announcememt of the election date, the journal **Education** invited the party spokespersons to summarise their priorities. The results were published on April 3. The space allocated reflected their relative standing. Conservative and Labour each enjoyed a full page; the Liberal Democrats approximately two thirds.

The attention paid to post-school provision by the two older parties was minimal. This presumably reflected tactical decisions about the public's concerns just prior to an election. Kenneth Clarke for the Conservatives referred in his final paragraphs to his Party's determination "to continue to enhance the status and range of post-16 education." Their policies would "give us the most effective and flexible system of vocational qualifications in the world". Higher education received just five lines in which its great importance was acknowledged and a commitment given to "open access . . . for everyone who has the ability and willingness to take advantage of it".

Jack Straw for Labour focused even more on education up to 18.

Indeed, he did not mention either higher or adult education. Only in his penultimate paragraph did he refer directly to the 16-19 age group. "Within ten years, our aim is that half of Britain's 16 to 19 year olds should get qualifications at the new Advanced Certificate level - A levels or their equivalent."

The contrast provided by the third party could hardly have been greater so far as the subscription to lifelong principles are concerned. Consider Matthew Taylor's opening paragraph:

> **When Liberal Democrats say that 'education is for life', we think not only of the benefits of schooling to the life of the individual and society, but also of education as a lifelong process. For the cultural change we seek is one that will see the emergence of a learning society, a revolution in which everyone participates and from which everyone benefits. In the general election campaign Liberal Democrats will be promoting the changes which we believe are vital to effecting that process.**

The statement went on in similar vein, linking all the proposals for improvements to pre-school, compulsory and 16-19 education to the over-arching goal - "to take Britain along the pathway to a learning society".

Arguably, a minority party could afford not to match its rivals blow for blow in the final concentration on immediate improvements at the compulsory level; but at that stage in the campaign the conventional wisdom was that the Liberal Democrats might well hold the balance of seats and their influence subsequently be felt in terms of the policies of a government requiring their support. The question to be considered is whether their distinctive stance in relation to lifelong learning has placed it, like electoral reform, firmly on the political agenda.

A L L

Lifelong Learning and the Election Campaign

John Taylor

Following a winter of pre-election skirmishing, the 1982 general election campaign got underway officially on March 11 when the Prime Minister, John Major, announced April 9 as the polling day. This paper examines the degree of importance accorded to education, particularly the education of adults, as an election issue in the four weeks of the campaign. They were four weeks in which every party politician, political pundit, pollster, broadcaster and newspaper journalist was frantically busy contributing to the vast outpouring of electioneering information and opinion. Any recording and examining of the content of that fast flowing flood inevitably has to be selective. Hence the focus here is on public responses to the three main parties' manifestos, the vast print reportage in the national daily broadsheets, and the seemingly endless hours of coverage by BBC national radio and television.

Education, meaning most often schooling - and secondary schooling at that - loomed large in party manifestos and news media coverage. This was perhaps more evident in the first fortnight of the campaign than in the last couple of weeks, when election fatigue seemed to shift the focus from specific issues to assessments of the party leaders' capabilities and the progress of the campaign itself. The early days bristled with party bids itemised in some statistical detail. Voter fatigue is reflected in Robin Day's observation that: " . . . the campaign has been about impenetrable statistics that no one can understand without an accountant at hand" (**Daily Telegraph**, April 3). Education was prone to this costed shopping list approach by all three main parties.

The news media were in something of a dilemma. The dominant 'story' for four weeks was the general election, and over that length of time it proved difficult to come up with new angles. The media response was analysed a little wearily by the columnist, Matthew Parris:

> **In a modern campaign, words like 'explain', 'discuss', 'propose' or 'debate' are elbowed aside by that wonderfully televisual word 'show'. Don't tell me, show me. What cannot be shown, preferably in less than two minutes with accompanying sound-bites, lacks impact . . . real canvassing is on the wane . Television and radio offer efficient ways of hitting larger numbers of voters in a shorter time.** (Times, March 30)

And yet the **Times** was able to report on the very next day (March 31) that:

> **Eight in ten readers of The Times, The Guardian and The Independent say they are interested in the campaign - compared with just over half the readers of the tabloids.**

Some comfort there for the continued support of parliamentary democracy, at least among broadsheet (more educated?) readers.

The appearance, early in the campaign, of the party manifestos gave plenty of scope for media reportage and analysis. The Conservatives made particular play with 'education' by publishing (March 16 - a day ahead of its main policy manifesto) a nineteen page education manifesto. Its title **Better Schools Better Standards** fairly reflected its concentration on schooling, underlined in the opening sentence of Kenneth Clarke's introduction: "The Prime Minister has set out the Conservative aim for education - 'the best for every child, the best from every child'". There was however a page at the end, entitled 'After 16', dealing with matters "vital to young people as they approach the world of work, and vital for the country as a whole" and part of a page on the need to expand 'Higher Education'. John Major nicknamed this manifesto the 'Thirty-Nine Steps' because it listed 39 proposals for education: eight on schooling 'standards', nine on 'choice and diversity', five on 'accountability to parents', four on 'teaching: a valued profession', six on further education, seven on higher education. The education of adults as such was nowhere mentioned.

That same day the media reported that the Prime Minister visited a primary school and a city technology college, while the Labour leader, Neil Kinnoch, also visited a primary school, where he was quoted oddly as saying: "Mr Major did not think that qualifications counted for much". (**Times**, March 18)

The main Conservative and Labour Party manifestos were launched the next day (March 18). The two page section on education in the Labour manifesto headed 'Raising standards in our schools' did conclude with three short paragraphs on further and higher education and a final eight line paragraph specifically on the intention to:

> **. . . stop the Conservatives' adult education cuts and encourage local authorities to develop adult and community education and access courses, particulalry for mature students. People over 50 who missed earlier opportunities will be able to apply for a 'Return to Learn' grant towards further or higher education.**

Elsewhere the manifesto proclaimed the need for a "training revolution to modernise people's skills" and promised to "transform the Careers Service to make careers advice available to everyone, young or old, employed or unemployed."

The Liberal Democrat manifesto gave a slightly different feel, partly perhaps because its education section was broadly titled 'Britain's skills: excellence for all'. In the event it also focused largely on schooling, although some space was given to "opening the doors to higher education" and one specific paragraph headed 'Enable education for life' which proposed to:

> . . . give every citizen an entitlement to a period of retraining or education at a time of their choice during their adult lives, based on distance learning costs. We will start by giving the guarantee to those groups most in need, including the long-term unemployed and single parents.

The news media's response to the manifestos was extensive, if largely aimed at secondary school matters. John O'Leary, the **Times**' Education Correspondent, summed up the Conservative's '39 Steps' as "opting-out - make or break". The following day (March 19) the same newspaper gave a full page to the two main parties' manifestos, which included a column inch on the 'Training Revolution'. The **Times** (March 24) saw calculation in the:

> Liberal Democrats' guarantee to make education a top spending priority . . . The fresh focus on education is also part of the party's attempt to counter the wasted vote threat, arguing during the remainder of the campaign that the more votes and seats it wins, the more likely its education programme will be carried out.

And again (April 4):

> One of their cleverest gambles has been the 'one penny on your tax to pay for better education'. Mr Ashdown . . . cares about education. But there was calculation too. 'I was determined' he says 'to attach at least one bread-and-butter issue to us'.

The **Times**' columnists condemned with even-handed ferocity both Labour and Conservative manifestos. Thus Matthew Parris (March 19):

> The Prime Minister waved his new manifesto. It was like the Labour one, like the Liberal Democrat one. It was full of limp sentences, stale abstract nouns, sly sub-clauses and shiny paper. It was entirely without warmth. Nothing important was put in and nothing trivial left out. No homily was spurned, no cliche unrehearsed . . . It was like a thousand other political manifestos.

A couple of days later the philologist, Philip Howard, struck out at

Labour's manifesto:

> In that eructation of verbosity, there is room for dozens of references to caring, community, common-sense, and other words that are deemed to have an encouraging sound by the politico-linguistic witch doctors. (Times, March 21)

More considered stocktaking followed. The **Guardian** (March 31) gave a full page to 'school economics', which calculated the enormous cost of any widespread opting-out of schools to grant-maintained status. The same newspaper (April 7) rehearsed what it reckoned to be the main electoral issues in education:

- Smaller classes - does size really matter?
- If the Tories lose the election, the future of opted-out schools is in doubt.
- What do teachers and parents hope for in education?
- Life in the sixth form after the election.

Interestingly the sixth form item went on to record:

> . . . more money for adult education is promised by Labour and people over 50 will be able to apply for a Return to Learn grant towards further or higher education. The Liberal Democrats pledge £325 million towards adult education. The Conservatives will support adult education both through FE funding councils and local authorities.

Also in reflective mood the **Times** (March 31) judged that:

> If education is to be the big idea that sweeps either of the main parties to power, they have left it late to make their mark. Labour (re)launched its education policy yesterday . . . The Liberal Democrats' concentration on education has coincided with a rise in their popularity. The proposal for a penny on income tax to fund a £2 billion education and training programme achieved the highest approval rating of the week, at 78 per cent since the publication of Mr Major's 'Thirty-Nine Steps', perhaps because it is not seen as an area in which they can expect to win votes . . . the election is turning out to be far from the culmination of the education debate started by Lord Callaghan 15 years ago.

The broadcasters were just as active as the press. A typical campaign day's agenda on BBC Radio 4 included: 0905, **Election Call** also transmitted on BBC TV; 1030, **Campaign Report**; 1430, **Politics of Choice**; 1500 and 2000, **Campaign Report**; 2330, **Election Platform**.

Broadcasting added the extra dimension of immediate public comment and question, especially in phone-in programmes such as the joint radio and television **Election Call**. This prompted one press columnist, Peter

Barnard, to comment that:

> **The time when the voice of the people . . . was heard only silently and behind a curtain on election day has long gone . . . television is particularly prone to the phone-in device . . . using viewers as contributors. This can be good fun or a waste of time depending on whether one of these slots produces a yorker bowled down a telephone line to a politican caught flashing outside off-stump. Snow in August may be a better bet.** (Times, March 18)

A look at the sort of questions posed on **Election Call** gives some flavour of where public educational concerns were centred. On March 17 Tony Blair, Labour's employment spokesman, had to respond to two questions in the education sphere: one from a forty-five year old redundant manager asking about the point of training for jobs which didn't exist; and the other from a retired school teacher demanding the restoration of teachers' rights in negotiating pay and conditions. The Welsh Nationalist, Daffyd Wigley, on March 20 competently fielded a question about the threatened closure of the Gwynedd Agricultural College by arguing for its continuation with a broader subject programme to meet the educational needs of its area - with money from Defence savings or "a penny or two on income tax". **Election Call** (April 1) to the Liberal Democrat, Charles Kennedy, provided two education questions. One was on funding for nursery education. The other expressed the exasperation of a training officer recently made redundant, who still wanted to use his training skills to help resolve the recession; his baffled anger came over so clearly that he had to be cut short by the chairman.

The real test came on April 3 with the appearance of the Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Clarke. The hour long programme allowed thirteen questions to be phoned-in, of which eight were on education. These covered:

- School teachers' workload.
- The educationalists' letter to the **Independent** (quoted in full below - see page 36), published that morning, which expressed professional concern about the expansion of higher education being accompanied by a deterioration in provision consequent on inadequate funding.
- Student grants.
- Private schools.
- National curriculum in music.
- Maintained school status, or as the caller said "opting-out bribery".

- Local Management of Schools.
- John Major's advocacy of a classless society when the education system was becoming more tiered: strongly disputed by Kenneth Clarke who claimed the government was "going for meritocracy and equality".

For the record, the non-education questions put to the Education Minister were on: a hung parliament; the low pay unit; a minimum wage; charity funding; and Northern Ireland unionists. No doubt the broadcasters do some preliminary sieving of the questions to obtain a rough balance: and perhaps they sieved away the continuing education questions?

However adult education emerged prominently on BBC Radio 5's **Education Matters** (April 5), a regular Sunday morning programme, which that day was given over to an hour-long election phone-in. In the studio were Kenneth Clarke, Jack Straw, Labour's education spokesman, and his Liberal Democrat counterpart, Matthew Taylor. The eight questions posed were on:

- Funding for Reading Recovery programmes rather than City Technology Colleges.
- The overall national education budget.
- Pre-school playgroups.
- Class sizes in schools.
- School teacher fatigue in coping with continuous change.
- Opting-out schools.
- How often do you visit schools?
- Non-vocational adult education funding.

That last question was asked by a Women's Institute member, obviously incensed at the prospect of voluntary bodies losing much or all of their adult education funding under the newly introduced Further Education Funding Council arrangements. In her anger, the caller repeatedly and noisily contradicted the 'panel' in mid sentence, making it difficult for listeners to follow what was being said by whom. A valiant if unfortunately misapplied effort.

On the eve of election day, **Election Call** figured the Prime Minister. John Major faced up to two questions on education:

- Parent choice in opting-out: prompting a reply about "more informa-

tion on schools performance . . . forcing up quality".

- Rising debt level among university students: leading to a rather oblique response about one-in-eight school leavers entering higher education in 1979, one-in-four now, and aiming for one-in-three before the end of the century.

General news broadcasts occasionally carried items on education-in-the-election. This was especially well exploited by the Liberal Democrats. Starting with a Paddy Ashdown press conference early in the campaign, which a BBC Radio 4 news broadcast reported as dismissing the "Tory 39 Steps as a wish list . . . where are the funds to support it?". And onto **World at One** (March 22) where Paddy Ashdown was interviewed saying "Education is central to our campaign . . . central to the next government . . . the percentage of Gross National Product allocated to it should be raised to European levels". To the question - what would you do if you became the next Education Secretary - he replied: "I would actively nurture adult education." And concluding on the eve-of-poll with an extract from Paddy Ashdown's press conference "a vote for the Liberal Democrats is above all a vote for Education . . . I say to first time voters - vote for your future, vote for education, vote for the environment".

In the BBC Radio 4 **News at Ten** (March 28) the Liberal Democrat, Sir David Steel, reported "an extraordinary flat election so far - no dominant issues", to which Labour's Brian Gould responded that "next week will see the emergence of education - the future of our children." This led David Steel to agree that the Liberal Democrats' standing at 19 per cent in the national polls - the highest yet - was a clear success for the party's emphasis on the development of education. A perhaps more realistic note was struck on BBC Radio 4's **Today** programme (March 30) when the education campaigner, Sir Claus Moser, spoke of:

> **One-in-seven children leaving primary school unable to read or write . . . why do so many dislike school? . . . only 52 per cent of 17 year olds stay on in school . . . we need an education plan for from three up to 70 year olds for the next 10 to 50 years . . . Labour and the Liberal Democrats are only offering marginally more spending.**

Reflecting on the creeping barrage of election broadcasting the **Times** (March 24) noted that:

> **. . . between 6am yesterday and the early hours of this morning, and including programmes that were only partly about the election, the four terrestrial channels had 19 hours 50 minutes of election-contaminated broadcasting.**

There was no corresponding calculation of the number of the **Times**' pages devoted to the same topic. The **Guardian** (April 6) raised the point in an article by Peter Golding of Loughborough University's Communications Research Centre under the title 'Election of Yawning Gaps', which addressed the question - are "the broadcast media failing in their democratic duty by boring the voter?" Perhaps the political parties should also take some blame: a view supported by this extract from the **Times**' later reportage (April 9) that:

> **An independent BARB audience survey found that on March 24, the night of Labour's health service broadcast, 6.3 million saw BBC 1's 'Nine O'Clock News' but only 4.3 million people watched the party's film.**

Shortly after election day the **Guardian** printed (April 11) a 'Broadcast Watch' comparing the coverage given to election issues by broadcasters and the tabloid newspapers' front pages. 'Economics' heads both lists; education just gets a rating in the broadcasters' output, but is nowhere in sight in the tabloids' performance:

Radio and television:	%
Economics	24
Progress of election	18
Opinion polls	12
Leadership competence	8
Health	6
Devolution	5
Education	3

Tabloid front pages:	%
Economics	30
Opinion polls	21
Dirty tricks	13
Leadership competence	12
Progress of election	7
Health	4
Constitutional (PR)	4
Crime/law/order	2
Housing	2
Race/immigration	1
Education	0

One of the main staples of campaign news was the almost daily appearance of the very latest opinon polls. Education (rarely qualified beyond that one word) generally rated high on the list of voting issues. Thus the **Times** (March 18) reported a Shelter/MORI poll:

Election Issues: percentage of voters who think that each of the following is a serious problem:

Issue:	%
Unemployment	96
Crime	95
Housing	91
Pollution	86
Education	77
National Health Service	69

A week later there was a two part MORI poll (**Times**, March 25) which asked:

(a) How much will your vote be influenced by the parties' policies on:
(b) Which party has the best policy on:

Party Policy	(a)% influenced 'a great deal'	(b)% party with best policy (*)	
Health Care	55	Lab	+ 30
Unemployment	49	Lab	+ 24
Managing Economy	45	Con	+ 4
Replacing Poll Tax	42	Lab	+24
Education	41	Lab	+14
Law and Order	40	Con	+14
Taxation	39	Con	+ 5
Housing	38	Lab	+22

(*) percentage change since start of election campaign.

Reported in the **Independent** (April 1) was a National Opinion Poll survey question posed on two dates a fortnight apart:

What 2 or 3 issues on this list are most important to you in deciding your choice of party in this election?

Answers in %	March 17/18	March 31 /April 1	Change
Health Service	62	62	0
Education/Schools	42	41	-1
Recession	38	38	0
Poll/Council Tax	33	33	0
Welfare Benefits incl Pensions	27	22	-5
Inflation	22	19	-3
Income Tax	15	18	+3
Defence	7	7	0

This poll also asked:

Which party do you trust most to take the right decisions about Education/Schools?

Answers in %	March 17/18	March 31 /April 1	Change
Conservative	30	27	-3
Labour	41	40	-1
Liberal Democrat	14	18	+4
None/Don't Know	15	15	0

The **Independent** commented on this shift towards the Liberal Democrats:

Last week's poll showed overwhelming public support for their (Liberal Democrat's) plan to raise the standard rate of income tax by 1p to pay for better schools; this week's poll suggests that some of this sentiment is helping the party win converts.

An interesting sidelight in the **Times** (April 18) referred to a survey by the Alfred Marks Employment Bureau of its employer clients on their views of 'Britain's Education' standards in literacy, numeracy, communications, computing, typing, word-processing. The Bureau received 237 responses, equivalent to 7.65 per cent of its clients, which led the Bureau's researcher to conclude "that education represented a low priority for most firms". Scarcely the stuff of an election issue there.

The teaching profession was a favourite target for pollsters. On April 3 the **Times** came up with survey figures from its stablemate, the **Times Educational Supplement**, reporting school teachers' stated voting intentions as: Labour 51 per cent, Liberal Democrat 24 per cent and Conservative 20 per cent. A few days before (March 30) **The Independent** had noted against a national survey of teachers that:

> **Many of the teachers voting Labour emphasized that they were not especially enthused by Labour's plans, or convinced that Labour would deliver more resources for schools; they had simply had enough of Conservative government.**

In an earlier issue of the **Times** (March 16) a percipient article by Stuart Maclure, entitled 'Tories gamble on teachers' votes' commented that "all parties wish to be judged on the education issue." The author noted that a majority of teachers voted Conservative in 1979, their support was still strong in 1983, it fell to 24 per cent in 1987 and now stood at 17 per cent for all groups of teachers from primary to tertiary: compared with 48 per cent for Labour and 22 per cent Liberal Democrat. Stuart Maclure concluded that:

> **Mr Clarke's genial pugnacity strikes (teachers) as old-fashioned arrogance. Their anger may benefit the Conservatives, telling voters that the Government has been bold enough to challenge a profession that is complacent and has fallen down on the job. The political calculation, however, turns on whether the alienation of the million people in the public education system is more than offset by the political friends the Conservatives have made with radical changes.**

Another way of sensing the temperature of election issues is the letters columns in the national press. The most obvious instance in this campaign of co-ordinated pressure was the stream of letters advocating more government commitment and spending on science. The former Principal of Glasgow University, Sir Alwyn Williams, wrote one of the six letters on the 'state of science' published in the **Times** on March 27:

> **The growth industries in the twenty-first century will be knowledge-based . . . Voters in the coming election who care about the prospects for their children**

and grandchildren should bear this in mind.

The **Independent** (March 31) carried a report on the Save British Science campaign and its criticisms of Alan Howarth, the junior minister in the Department of Education and Science responsible for science. This was echoed in a letter to the **Times** (April 6) from Jeremy Bray, Labour spokesman on science, and two letters in the **Guardian** (April 7) about the concerns of Save British Science supporters. Even the presenter of BBC Radio 3's science programme **Blue Skies** (April 8) expressed his opinion that it had been:

> A rotten election for science . . . only the Liberal Democrat manifesto mentions science funding . . . what's gone wrong . . . researchers have increased and more is being spent, but on near-market and applied research.

It may of course have been entirely coincidental that immediately following the Conservative success in the election, the Department of Education and Science became the Department for Education; and its former science remit was hived off to a new Office for Science and Technology with its own minister.

Education figured scarcely at all in the letters columns, most certainly not in the systematic way that the Save British Science lobby had successfully promoted its message. However there was one day (April 3) when a letter signed by a hundred 'educationalists' appeared in the **Independent**. It was taken up and commented on by all the other news media. The letter read in full:

> As teachers and researchers in higher education we wish to register our dismay at the impact of government policy upon our work in the past 13 years.
> 1. We have seen contradictory and confused policies which began with arbitrary cuts in spending. These have now culminated in demands that the number of students in higher education should be rapidly increased. We applaud the expansion of educational opportunities, but not within a philosophy which is expressed by the phrase "pile them high and teach them cheap".
> 2. We have seen the erosion of research and teaching facilities. In some cases there has not even been sufficient money to maintain the buildings in which we teach.
> 3. We have seen financial pressure on our students, as they stuggle with inadequate funding.
> 4. We have seen many of our most able and senior colleagues leave to work in other countries where good research and teaching are seen as a crucial investment in the future.
> 5. Finally, we wish to state that when the Conservative Party came to power in 1979, Britain had one of the finest systems of higher education in the world. It is a national scandal that this system has been so undermined and those who work and try to study within it have been so demoralised. Education should be

> a key element in the growth and prosperity of our country. The damage that has been done must be repaired and we hope the electors will bear that in mind when choosing a future government.

Among the signatories, who were of course higher education staff, there were only a very few names of people working specifically in continuing education. While the letter sparked momentary news interest, and was briefly recalled over the next few days, there was no systematic follow-through. Kenneth Clarke dismissed it the same day as being about a funding "reduction per head" which he regarded as "making sense in unit costs and improved efficiency."

Outside party advertisements there was only a very limited amount of campaign advertising in the national press. There were occasional instances of educational pressure groups putting over their message. A full page advertisement by the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) in the **Times** (April 4) showed a primary school class whose teacher was saying "And in this class we're learning about state school funding" while the children chanted "One times nothing is nothing . . . Two times nothing is nothing . . . Three times nothing is nothing, etc." The NALGO caption to the advertisement read:

> The Government can change the curriculum, can encourage schools to opt out, can make empty statements about choice, but ultimately the problem is underfunding. Investment in education is investment in the country's future. That's a lesson the Government still needs to learn.

On April 8 there was a full page advertisement in the **Times**, jointly subscribed by the National Health Service Support Federation, the National Conference of Parent/Teacher Associations, the National Union of Students, and the National Health Service Consultants Association. An unusual combination of interests, whose combined message was "neglected hospitals and schools" means "a poorly educated and less healthy population."

In relation to party advertising the **Times** (April 9) reported that:

> Voters in the constituencies of Richmond, Battersea and Derbyshire South have told the London advertising agency Ray Keating Hammer that they are fed up with negative, bash the opposition type advertising used by the Conservatives and Labour. They made an exception for the Liberal Democrat poster, which had Labour posters on the left, Tory posters on the right, and the message: 'What ever happened to education, Europe, the environment, constitutional reform, transport, housing and energy?'

A more frequent feature in the national broadsheets was reportage in

short articles about door-to-door canvassing in local constituencies. This is where education issues of all types should surely have surfaced. Oddly however it proved extremely difficult to find any mention of education. One exception was an account in the **Times** (April 9) of the electoral scene in Hartlepool, where there was a reference to concern about student grants. Similar monitoring of the 1979 general election also found little apparent educational interest at the locally reported level. (1)

There might be some explanation for this in Brian Redhead's questioning (BBC Radio 4 **Today**, March 17) when he was discussing the newly published Conservative education manifesto with a BBC reporter, who had said there was "nothing new" in it. Redhead responded that there were an "awful lot of similarities between Labour and Conservatives except opting-out, so will it affect how people vote? Will they say it's OK in my school but not in general?"

There seem to be two main points to be drawn from this monitoring of education as a general election issue. First 'education' rarely means more than schooling to party politicians and the British voters. Plenty of evidence for this view has been rehearsed in the preceding paragraphs. But look no further than the full page 'education and the election' coverage in the **Education Guardian** (March 17), in which the three main parties' education spokesmen were interviewed and never mentioned the education of adults. Similarly the **Times** (April 1) gave a full page to education with no mention of adult, further or higher education. In the eve-of-election words of Kenneth Clarke (BBC Radio 4 **Midnight News**) the Conservative's education campaigning had "concentrated on what is going on in the classroom - students, testing, curriculum, and how that's taught".

The second point may be best put as a question - does it really matter anyway? The political observer, Ivor Crewe, commented (**Times**, April 9) on a MORI Poll for the **Sunday Times**:

> **Do campaigns matter? Exertion, expenditure and exposure all reached unprecedented levels yet the net impact on the voters has been very limited . . The sharpest changes of opinion were about the issues that counted. In week one, unemployment was most frequently mentioned - by 47 per cent. By week four the proportion fell to 38 per cent, overtaken by health (up from 40 to 59 per cent) and by education (up from 26 to 48 per cent).**

So maybe it doesn't matter in general, but it does matter for 'issues that count' - like 'education'?

It certainly seemed to matter to one politically committed observer, Professor Anthony O'Hear of Bradford University, whose eve-of-poll article on 'Education - the election debate that never happened' (**Daily Telegraph**, April 8) contained:

> I cannot imagine why the Conservatives have not been campaigning harder on this issue. It is one which is central to the Conservative view of the future of Britain . . . Labour and the Liberal Democrats are . . . against diversity, parental independence and pupil opportunity in education. They are in favour of increasing the very centralisation and bureaucratisation which is the root cause of our present educational malaise.

It would be proper to end on a less partial note, which also hints at how compulsive election watching can become, even if your 'issue' doesn't figure as you feel it should. Colin Flint, the further education columnist in the **Higher** (April 3), wrote:

> Elections again, I'm afraid. I tried to write about something neutral , like GNVQs or credit transfer or education-industry partnerships, but I do love elections and this is perhaps the first Education Election . . . We have not yet heard from Screaming Lord Sutch whose terms for entering into a coalition I like (at least one loony in the cabinet) but if we could pick up bits from elsewhere we might end up with a decent policy. Though no one yet is wholly convincing on post-compulsory education.

Amen to that last sentence. And if this perhaps did not really turn out to be the 'first Education Election', the post-school education world might have something to learn from the Save British Science lobby to make sure that 1997 is.

Reference

(1) Taylor F J 'The Education of Adults and the 1979 General Election' in **Studies in Adult Education** Vol 11 No 2 Leicester Autumn 1979 pp.160-172.

A L L

The Language of Priorities

Gerry Fowler

After months of fevered speculation - 'the longest election campaign in British history' - a general election was called for 9 April 1992. The manifestos of the three major British political parties were published in the first week of the campaign proper. The announcement of the dissolution of Parliament meant as ever that most unfinished bills were passed into law without much further debate; thus the outgoing Government's 1991 Bill became with minor amendments the Education (Further and Higher Education) Act 1992.

The Conservative manifesto was almost solely concerned with *youth* education and training. For adults the emphasis is on the retraining of the unemployed. A new initiative is the proposal to give to (all?) employed people a voucher with which they can buy a 'skill check', so that they can be assessed and guided "on how to make the most of their working lives". The acceptance in principle of each adult's entitlement to assistance in further self-development must be accounted a step towards the ideal of lifelong education, but it is far removed from the goal, since the help consists solely of assessment by others (the employer or his agents?), and relates only to the recipient's *working* life. There is no indication of the timing of this initiative.

The Labour Party offered a somewhat wider vision. Its new and broader Advanced Certificate would not be for 16-19 year olds alone, but "open to part-time and full-time students of any age", and transferable between institutions on a credit basis. At the same time Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were to be encouraged to develop adult and community education and access courses, particularly for mature students. 'Return to learn' grants to further education and higher education would be available to "people over 50 who missed earlier opportunities" - although this may seem an excessively vague criterion. Doubling the number of higher education students in twenty years (now part of the common currency of the higher education debate) may seem to postulate wider participation by adults, but the emphasis on student grants and hostility to student loans equally suggest that these proposals had not yet been fully costed.

The last criticism may also be made of the Liberal Democrats, with their

proposals for a Student Income Entitlement and a Student Allowance for all students, both full- and part-time, alongside an increase in higher education numbers to two million by the year 2000. But they uniquely were clear that every citizen must have an entitlement to a period of retraining or education at a time of their choice during their adult lives, "based on distance learning costs". Here is the first commitment by a major political party in Britain to the principle that the State has a role in facilitating lifelong education for all. There is no bias in favour of a narrow vocationalism; witness the commitment to a single Department of Education and Training, to an open credit-based system of higher education, and (a straw in the wind blowing towards a less work-orientated society) the establishment of a Humanities Research Council.

The election campaigns of the parties inevitably focused on economic issues above all others. Health had a good airing, and to a lesser degree education. Unsurprisingly, education discussion was primarily concerned with the schools, with their funding, with testing, and with standards. Problems of adult and lifelong education occasionally surfaced, but in a specific rather than a strategic form - the effect of the 1992 Act on LEA adult education provision, or the funding of graduates on Professional Conversion Courses. What was clear was that the Labour Party's commitment to increase educational expenditure to £600 million over twenty-two months, and the Liberal Democrats' immediately to raise tax by a penny in the pound for revenue 'hypothecated' to education alone, related almost entirely to the school sector. Longer term priorities remained vague. General elections are what they are.

'The religion of Socialism is the language of priorities,' said Aneurin Bevan. With the substitution of 'philosophy' for 'religion', the same is true of Conservatism, Liberal Democracy, and Labourism today. A general election held in the middle of a deep recession, accompanied by the fear that manufacturing industry in Britain is in terminal decline, that the power of the purse rather than need increasingly determines health care, and that the basic fabric of publicly-provided school education is collapsing, is unlikely to focus on lifelong learning. It was nevertheless odd that some salient certainties about what remains of this millenium were neglected.

If we take demography first, we know that the number of 18 year olds will continue to decline until 1996, and will then rise very slowly until 2000. At the same time, the proportion of the population which is 'retired' steadily increases.

Then, we know now that if the demand for labour picks up again, the skills required will not precisely mirror those of the 1970s and 1980s. Whether in manufacturing or service industry, the skills required will be increasingly 'high tech'. This does not, however, mean that the machine takes over from man; for the optimal use of advanced machines demands intelligent and informed management at every level.

Thirdly, we can be certain that recession will not lead to a period of very rapid economic growth, with jobs for all, buoyant tax revenues, and money available to be thrown at every problem. This is partly because the world recession has roots in the problems of the former Communist bloc, and in those of the Third World, which will not be solved rapidly. In the case of the European Community, it is partly because of German difficulties with the 'Five New Lands', which force up European interest rates. Britain is now constrained by membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism. Our industry may be more efficient than it was (as is everybody else's), but that it remains barely competitive is demonstrated by our massive balance of trade deficit. When recession ends, employment will grow quite slowly, and any rise in public expenditure will be limited, irrespective of political wishes, not least by the necessity of reducing the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.

Then again we are now part of a Europe more unified economically and culturally, and of a shrinking world. Oddly, it is here that the boundary between vocational and liberal education, between training and education, quite vanishes. One wishes to learn Italian the better ot market his products in Italy, another to secure for herself a lucrative job in Brussels, another to work for a Milan-based firm in Britain, a fourth to cope with excessively entrepreneurial Sicilians while on holiday, and a fifth to be able to read Moravia, Manzoni or even Dante in the original. Can there be a motive test before it is determined whether they are admitted to a class, or if that class is to be publicly funded? If it does not run, Britain may be the poorer in every possible sense.

Finally, history suggests that the newly affluent slowly come to share the values of those who have been wealthier longer, and their children do so rapidly. This is true not only of the possession of material goods, useful or useless. They also want to read, to hear , to see, to taste what their erstwhile 'betters' esteem. First comes Eurodisney, but then literature, the arts, the museums, the sites, and even haute cuisine. The National Lottery may help to pay for some of these. But it will not satisfy the demand for knowledge which is the concomitant of changing tastes.

If these are self-evident truths, they are now no more so than that the Conservatives won the 1992 general election with a clear majority over all other parties. We *should* be concentrating in education and training enhancing the knowledge and skills of adults, including those of the theoretically retired, on developing informed and humane management of new technologies and skills, with extending the knowledge and vision of our economic casualties as well as their work skills, with encouraging the spiritual integration of our people into Europe and the wider world, with giving those newly economically strong access to the knowledge and even the socially acceptable pleasures enjoyed by their predecessors. We *shall* concentrate on the young and, for adults, on retraining, especially of the unemployed, on skill assessment, and the world of work. Pehaps, if the freedom of the individual is to be judged by the level of the direct taxes he or she pays, we can afford no more.

The fear is that, if these priorities prevail, we shall not become a more prosperous society when compared to our neighbours, but we shall become a society less liberal and humane, and progressively more marginalised in Europe and the world. The sum total of the happiness of our citizens will be less than it could have been. From a Benthamite standpoint, the future for Britain and for lifelong education here looks gloomy.

A L L

Authors

Gerry Fowler, for many years a Labour Member of Parliament, was Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science in the Wilson government. On leaving Parliament he accepted a Chair of Education at the Open University. He was appointed Assistant Director of Huddersfield Polytechnic, and retired in 1992 as Rector of the Polytechnic of East London.

Richard Hoggart began his distinguished academic career as an extra-mural tutor. As Professor of Modern English Literature at Birmingham University, he founded the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. He was for five years Assistant Director of UNESCO in Paris, before returning to be Warden of Goldsmiths' College in the University of London. He chaired the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education throughout its six years of operation. In retirement he has published a three-part autobiography.

Frank Molyneux lectured at Nottingham University for over 20 years, specialising in comparative education. He was a founder member of the Association for Recurrent Education and is the first chairman of the Association for Lifelong Learning.

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Appendix: Education and Training Sections in the Party Manifestos

Conservative Manifesto 46

The Conservative Party published a specific manifesto on education, **Better Standards Better Schools**, and a general manifesto entitled **The Best Future for Britain**. The extract reproduced here is the education and training section (the greater part of a chapter entitled 'Opportunity for All') in **The Best Future for Britain**.

Labour Manifesto 51

The Labour manifesto was entitled **It's Time To Get Britain Working Again**. One of its seven chapters dealt with 'Raising Standards in our Schools'. This is reproduced here in full. The concluding section below, 'We will invest in people at work', is an extract from the chapter on 'Building a Strong Economy'.

Liberal Democrat Manifesto 55

The Liberal Democrat manifesto, entitled **Changing Britain for Good**, contained six chapters, including one on 'Britain's Skills: excellence for all', which is reproduced here in full.

The Conservative Manifesto

The Conservative Party published a specific manifesto on education, **Better Standards Better Schools**, and a general manifesto entitled **The Best Future for Britain**. The following extract is the education and training section (the greater part of a chapter entitled 'Opportunity for All') in **The Best Future for Britain**.

Conservatives believe that high standards in education and training are the key to personal opportunity and national success. We believe in partnership with parents, choice in schools and a good grounding in the basic skills all children need to make a success of their lives. We are committed to widening opportunities without compromising academic standards. We will continue to expand higher education and training. We will reinforce the rights of the individual in the world of work, and break down artificial barriers to advancement. By extending opportunity and arming people with the power to choose, we will give valuable freedoms and a powerful spur to achievement.

Schools, Pupils & Parents

We are now seeing real improvements in our education system. One in four young people goes on to higher education, at the beginning of the 1980s, it was only one in eight. Sixty per cent of 16 year-olds stay on in full-time education, up from only 40 per cent in 1979. And we have embarked on the most important and wide-ranging reforms since the 1940s.

For the first time in our history, we will soon have a National Curriculum which will require all the main school subjects to be covered thoroughly. The testing of 7 year-olds is well under way and tests for older children are now being developed. Starting this September, GCSE courses will be steadily integrated with the National Curriculum.

Under the Parent's Charter, all schools will have to provide at least one written report on the progress of each child each year. Information on the performance of all local schools will be given to parents, enabling them to exercise choice more effectively.

We believe all parents have the right to choice in education - not only those who can afford school fees. Young people differ in their interests and aptitudes, and we need a range of schools to offer them the best opportunities. We have always fought to maintain diversity in education, protecting the right of local people to preserve their grammar schools, and defending independent schools against mindless Labour attacks. And we have always valued the important contribution made by the churches to our children's education.

We have further increased diversity by:

- Giving schools control over their own budgets and encouraging new types of school.
- Allowing schools to become independent of local councils, by applying for Grant-Maintained status if the parents involved so wish. By mid-1992, over 200 GM schools will be up and running.
- Creating a number of highly popular City Technology Colleges.
- Launching the highly successful initiative under which schools are able to bid directly for the resources to become Technology Schools.

We intend to take all these initiatives further and offer parents more choice in the new Parliament. Popular schools will be allowed to expand, and more schools will be able to apply for technology funding. We will make it easier for small schools to enjoy the benefits of GM status by grouping together.

We will complete the introduction of the National Curriculum offering 10 subjects at a nationally defined standard - English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Technology, Art, Music, PE and, in secondary schools, a foreign language.

- Regular and straightforward tests will be in place for all 7, 11 and 14 year-olds by 1994.
- GCSE at age 16 will be integrated into the National Curriculum, with a new A+ grade to test the most able. The majority of marks will come from a written exam.
- We will continue to encourage the creation of nursery places. For the first time, over 50 per cent of three and four-year olds have places either in nursery or primary schools.
- Full information will be published annually about the performance of all local schools in each area.
- Independent inspection of schools will provide parents with straightforward reports on their child's school, together with an action plan from governors to remedy any weaknesses.
- Popular schools which are over-subscribed will be given the resources to expand.
- GM schools will be able to change their character if that is what parents clearly want and the change fits in with the wider needs of the local area.
- The Technology Schools Initiative will be expanded across the country.
- Existing schools which opt for GM status will be able to emulate City Technology Colleges and attract private technology sponsorship.
- We will maintain the Assisted Places scheme, which gives access to independent education to many families who could not otherwise afford it.
- We will ensure that the partnership between the state and the churches in education is maintained and strengthened.
- We will enable small schools to apply for GM status in groups.
- We will pay particular attention to raising educational standards in areas of deprivation in our cities.

Teaching

We are determined to reinforce the professionalism of teachers and the esteem in which they are held. We have created an independent Teachers' Pay Review Body. We accepted in full its first recommendations, nearly half of all teachers are now earning over £20,000 a year. We will press ahead with regular appraisal of teachers to encourage high standards and develop professional skills.

As a first step in the reform of teacher training, postgraduate students will spend much more time in school classrooms, learning their skills under the practised eye of senior teachers.

It is vital that the education system should attract back women who have taken a career break to raise a family. Through grants to local authorities, we are financing schemes to introduce more flexible working practices - such as job-sharing.

- We will undertake reform of the teacher training system to make it more effective in developing classroom skills.
- We will develop measures to encourage women with family responsibilites to enter or return to teaching.

After 16

We believe that young people should be free to choose between college, work-based training and sixth form studies. We are giving further education colleges and sixth form colleges in England and Wales autonomy free from council control. We also value our school sixth forms, and will ensure they retain their place in the new system. And we will allow them to attract older students as well. FE colleges will continue to receive support for adult education, while local authorities will retain the resources to respond to local demand for leisure courses.

We will defend the well respected A-level examinations, which Labour would destroy. We will continue to encourage participation in AS examinations. We will also continue to develop new high-quality National Vocational Qualifications, and introduce a new post-16 diploma which recognises achievement in both vocational and academic courses.

- We will develop an Advanced Diploma which can be earned by students pursuing either academic or vocational courses, and a new General National Vocational Qualification.
- We intend to allow school sixth forms to open their doors if they wish to older students, and to accept training credits or fees from them.
- From April next year, further education and sixth form colleges will be independent of local government control.
- Mature students will enjoy a wider choice of courses.

Higher Education

Britain maintains the best university system in Europe. We have also developed a thriving network of polytechnics, whose student numbers have increased nearly sixfold since the end of the 1960s.

By the year 2000, one in three young people will follow full-time higher education courses. Meanwhile, the number of mature entrants to higher education has risen by 65 per cent since 1979. And our universities are attracting increasing numbers of foreign students.

Despite this huge expansion, our students enjoy one of the most generous support systems in the world. The introduction of student loans has given students 30 per cent more money for their living costs than the former system of grants alone. The new system will steadily

reduce the proportion of students' living costs that their parents are expected to meet.

- We will continue to expand the number of students in higher education. We are abolishing the artificial 'binary line' between universities and polytechnics.
- We are putting in place new mechanisms to ensure that academic standards are maintained in higher education.
- We will continue to provide generous support for students and to expand our student loans commitment.

The Training Revolution

A training revolution is under way in Britain. The Government's job is to create a framework within which men and women of all ages can develop skills, gain qualifications and shape their own futures.

We have already brought the world of work and the world of school into closer harmony. Government and industry are working together. Employers already spend over £20,000 million a year on training. Government spending on training has increased two and a half times in real terms since 1979, to £2,800 million. The Government's effort is being channelled through the 82 new Training and Enterprise Councils (and the Local Enterprise Companies in Scotland) - the most significant peace-time partnership between government and industry this century.

- 'Compacts' have resulted in many young people working to goals for attainment and attendance in school. In return, they are guaranteed a job with training - or training leading to a job.
- This year, two million students will participate in the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.
- Investors in People is the new national standard for companies making a commitment to training. TECs play an important role in helping companies attain it.
- Employer-led TECs and LECs are delivering Government-funded training programmes which reflect industry's understanding of local needs.
- Industry is working closely with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.
- The CBI's training targets for Britain's workforce demonstrate a new partnership between business and education.

75 per cent of 16 year-olds stay on in full-time education or Youth Training schemes, up from 46 per cent in 1979. Since 1983, over 3 million young people have taken up Youth Training places. And 82 per cent go into jobs or further education when they complete YT.

Now we are offering young people aged 16 and 17 vouchers they can use to buy approved courses of education or training, and which will put the power of choice in their hands.

In 1988, we launched Employment Training, the largest programme of its kind in Europe, which has since helped 1.2 million people. While local programmes are the responsibility of the TECs, the Government guarantees the offer of help to particular groups of unemployed.

Last year, we launched the new Employment Action programme, which will help more than 61,000 people in a full year. This is a new addition to a range of measures which include

Jobclubs, the Job Interview Guarantee Scheme and othet tested methods of helping unemployed people back to work.

We are also supporting individual training effort. Since 1988, when we launched Career Development Loans (interest-free for up to 15 months), over 25,000 people have benefited. Last year's Budget gave tax relief on training fees - a boost to the 250,000 people a year who finance their own training. Now with the TECs, we intend to introduce new financial help for career and training guidance.

- By the end of the new Parliament, the new system of National Vocational Qualifications should cover virtually every occupation in the economy. The CBI's training targets envisage 80 per cent of young people reaching NVQ level 2 by the end of the Parliament.
- We intend to make training credits available to all 16 year-olds and 17 year-olds within the lifetime of the new Parliament. The TECs will continue to be responsible for the YT programme for this age group.
- We will continue to finance training programmes for the long-term unemployed and those who face particular difficulties.
- We will launch with the TECs a new initiative, giving people a voucher with which they can buy a 'skill check', providing assessment and guidance on how to make the most of their working lives.

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The Labour Manifesto

The Labour Party manifesto was entitled **It's Time To Get Britain Working Again**. One of its seven chapters dealt with 'Raising Standards in our Schools'. This is reproduced here in full. The concluding section below, 'We will invest in people at work', is an extract from the chapter on 'Building a Strong Economy'.

Good education is the best investment in Britain's future. All girls and boys, from every background, must be able to discover their talents and fulfil their potential.

We want every child to get qualifications that count. We need safe, disciplined schools, where professional teachers work closely with parents. Learning must become a lifetime opportunity, with new chances to update skills at work.

That is our vision of a well-educated Britain.

But, under the Conservatives, Britain today invests a smaller share of our national wealth in education than in 1979. More and more parents are now being forced to pay for essentials in a system which should be free.

Labour will modernise Britain's schools. Over the next 22 months, additional resources of at least £600 million will be made available for investment in education. We will then continue steadily to increase the share of Britain's national wealth invested in education.

We will offer nursery education to three and four year olds

By the end of the decade, all three and four year olds will have the opportunity of nursery education if their parents so wish.

Within six months, every local education authority will have to set targets for steadily increasing nursery and childcare services. Childhood Partnerships between councils, parents, schools, local businesses and community groups will help extend a wide range of childcare and nursery education services.

The immediate investment in childcare . . . is only the beginning. Our Ministry for Women will have a central role in helping to develop a nationwide childcare strategy, including out-of-school and holiday provision as well as care for younger children.

We will raise standards in our schools

By investing in better teaching, smaller classes and modern books and equipment, we will raise education standards.

Teachers will be guaranteed a proper salary and career structure. A General Teaching Council for England and Wales will help them achieve the highest professional standards. Higher quality training will be followed by proper support for newly-qualified teachers. A national in-service training programme will ensure that all teachers are fully qualified in the subject they are teaching.

Within twelve months, we will end the scandal of primary school classes of over 40 children.

We will then establish and steadilt reduce maximum limits on class sizes, until no primary school child is taught in a class of more than 30.

To make sure that children are reading by the age of seven, we will create a national Reading Standards Programme, with a National Reading Recovery Programme to help those in difficulty. £20 million will be invested in reading recovery in the first year. National tests must provide the information to help pupils, and to judge schools' effectiveness, without wasting good teaching time. Children with special needs or special abilities will receive the extra attention they deserve.

Nine out of ten secondary school children are in comprehensive schools. We will end selection at 11 where it still exists. We will introduce a fairer system for all school reorganisations with independent public enquiries. We will phase out the Assisted Places scheme (without affecting pupils currently on a place, or offered one from September 1992) and redirect the savings to meet wider educational needs.

Because the national curriculum cannot be properly taught without new textbooks, we will earmark funds for class and library books. Every child needs a good grounding in science and technology. We will introduce a programme to improve equipment and laboratories. We will start to tackle the backlog of school repairs. For instance, we will invest £30 million to ensure that within 12 months, no child has to use an outside lavatory .

Guaranteed standards

Conservative plans to privatise the schools' inspectorate will be scrapped. Our Education Standards Commission, together with Her Majesty's Inspectors, will monitor the performance of every school. If a school is under-performing, the commission, which will be answerable to Parliament, will have the powers to ensure that it is brought up to standard.

National Awards, similar to the Queen's Award for Industry, will encourage excellence in schools.

We will reform the Conservative's scheme for the local management of schools. All schools will be free to manage their day-to-day budgets, with local education authorities given a new strategic role. Opted-our schools will be freed from central government control and brought together with City Technology Colleges into the mainstream of the local school system.

New rights for parents

Home-school contacts will tell parents exactly what the school undertakes to deliver and what their responsibilities are. If they are dissatisfied with the school or education authority, they will be able to call in the Education Standards Commission and get action taken.

We wish to see the key role of church and other voluntary-aided schools secured and available equally and on the same criteria to all religions.

We will modernise the curriculum

Labour will modernise the national curriculum and apply it in all schools. From the age of 14, pupils will study five essential subjects: English, mathematics, science, a modern language and technology. In schools teaching in Welsh, the study of Welsh will be included.

Every pupil will also be offered a wide range of academic, technical and other options.

Taking account of the views of parents, employers, teachers, pupils and the recommendations of the Higginson Report, we will establish a five-subject A level and bring it together with technical qualifications into our new Advanced Certificate. Open to part-time and full-time students of any age, it will include 'credits' which can be transferred between different institutions. We will consult widely about the detailed structure of this new qualification, and finalise proposals quickly.

Young people must have real opportunities to widen their experience and skills. Sixteen year olds not in full-time education will be entitled to a new traineeship lasting for up to two years, with an option of a further two years. Every young person in employment will be guaranteed the right to Learn while You Earn.

Labour's education targets

We have set ourselves four education targets. They are the basis for our strategy and the benchmark against which progress will be judged.

First, a nursery education for all three and four year olds whose parents wish by the year 2000.

Second, within five years, we want four out of five 16 to 18 year olds to be able to achieve at least five GCSEs at grades A, B or C, or their equivalent.

Third, by the end of the decade, we want half of Britain's 16 to 19 years olds to be able to qualify at the new Advanced Certificate level A levels or the equivalent in BTEC and other post-16 opportunities for study.

Fourth, within 20 years, we will double the number of students in higher education, with at least one in three young adults participating by the year 2000.

The student loan scheme deters many bright youngsters from poor families. We will replace it with a fairer system of student grants and targeted help for housing and vacation hardship. We will take effective steps to safeguard standards throughout higher education.

We will stop the Conservative's adult education cuts and encourage local authorities to develop adult and community education and access courses, particularly for mature students. People over 50 who missed earlier opportunities will be able to apply for a 'Return to Learn' grant towards further or higher education.

We will invest in people at work

The key to a successful modern economy is a well-educated and motivated workforce. We cannot compete on the basis of low educational standards or poor working conditions. Britain's future must be high skill, high wage and high tech.

Two things are needed: a training revolution to modernise people's skills, and rights for employees to fair treatment at work.

We will offer unemployed people a range of employment and training opportunities. Our aim is to ensure that anyone who is unemployed for more than six months has a choice of job experience or training. We will also help the people often left out of good training

opportunities, including the disabled, women returning after caring for children, and those with special educational needs.

Expanded childcare will help women return to work and undertake training. A critical task is to upgrade the skills of people in work. Training and Enterprise Councils will be retained, reformed and made more broadly representative of their local communities and given stable budgets.

Instead of the present series of piecemeal initiatives we will establish a coherent national training policy to meet the needs of industry and provide people with real equal opportunities at work. All employers, except very small businesses, will be obliged to invest a minimum amount on training their workforce or make a contribution to the local or national training effort. Training will be a real partnership between government and industry, not an excuse to shift all the burden onto employers.

We will transform the Careers Service to make careers advice available to everyone, young or old, employed or unemployed.

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The Liberal Democrat Manifesto

The Liberal Democrat manifesto, entitled **Changing Britain for Good**, contained six chapters, including one on 'Britain's skills: excellence for all', which is reproduced in full below.

Britain's citizens are our greatest asset. Liberal Democrats will invest in people to enable every individual to fulfil their potential, and, in so doing, build the nation's economic and social strength. We aim to create a first-class education system for all, not just by providing adequate public funding, but also through reforms which increase choice and opportunity for each citizen.

Liberal Democrats start from the belief that every individual, whatever their age, sex, background or ability, possesses a unique potential and a valuable contribution to offer society. Our target is excellence for all. This requires more relevant courses, higher standards and improved provision. Excellence also has a cost. We will guarantee that Liberal Democrats will increase investment in education by £2 billion in the first year, even though this will require an extra penny in the pound on income tax. Our priorities for investment are preschool education, education and training for 16-19 year olds, and adult education.

Aiming high; raising standards

Our aim is simple - to give Britain a world-class education system, in which high quality is the key, by the year 2000. We will:

- **Create the framework for high standards** by establishing a single Department of Education and Training with oversight of all education and training. We will set up a National Qualifications Council to coordinate a single system of academic and vocational courses for 14-19 year olds, and a new Higher Education Standards Council to monitor quality in higher education.
- **Improve inspections**. We will ensure that a fully independent HM Inspectorate of Education and Training properly staffed and funded, reports on the entire range of public and private provision from preschool education to universities. Local inspectors of schools will be answerable to the Inspectorate, which will also have a new role as Education Ombudsman. We will carry out a Schools Building Audit alongside the regular four-yearly local school inspection, to assess the physical state of schools and equipment. We will reinstate the buildings standards suspended in 1989.
- **Support teachers**. We will set up a statutory General Teaching Council to improve professional qualifications and set standards for teacher training and retraining. We will improve provision for in-service training and career breaks for women teachers with children. We supported the introduction of the Teachers' Pay Review Body and believe it will ensure that teachers are properly rewarded.

Putting education at the heart of the community

Liberal Democrats pioneered Local Management of Schools. Now we aim to increase further the day-to-day independence of schools and colleges within a democratically accountable framework of local education authorities. This includes:

- **A new independence for schools and further education colleges**. We will give schools increased administrative support in return for the wider opening of their facilities to the local community. We will fully fund individual teacher costs. We will encourage every school to enhance its character, ethos and areas of special interest within a more flexible National Curriculum framework. Within this context of greater freedom for all schools, we will end the two-tier system created by Grant Maintained Schools and City Technology Colleges by returning them to the strategic planning framework of the local elected education authority. Strategic responsibility for adult and further education will remain with the LEA. LEA representatives on school governing bodies will reflect fairly the political balance of the authority.
- **A new role for local democracy**. We will require LEAs to guarantee a suitable place, with proper support, for every child in education and training up to the age of 19. This will include responsibility for ensuring that schools and colleges meet the highest standards of academic performance, discipline and behaviour, and for providing special services for schools, such as peripatetic music, language development, or behaviour support. Published information about schools and colleges will recognise achievement on the basis of 'education value added' - progress made by pupils - rather than crude 'league tables' of results.
- **Independent schools**. We recognise the contribution to excellence which the best of these schools make, and the right of those who wish to pay for private education to do, but this should not be subsidised from public resources. We will phase out the Assisted Places Scheme without affecting those already in it, and restore the money saved to state schools. We will review the charitable status of independent schools with the intention of ensuring that the benefits of charitable status are only awarded to those institutions that make a genuine contribution to the wider community.

Educating the individual

Liberal Democrats will ensure that every individual can receive high-quality education and training throughout their life from before school to retirement. But the current system places too little emphasis on vocational achievements. We will:

- **Guarantee preschool education for every child**. We will guarantee every child access to two years' preschool education with a choice of preschool provision.
- **Introduce a National Record of Achievement**. We will ensure that every pupil has a National Record of Achievement so that progress is properly documented and shared between parents and schools. Supplemented by individual diagnostic testing, this will replace the current Standard Assessment Tasks in order to raise standards.
- **Reduce class sizes**. We aim to reduce maximum class sizes so that no registration class in the country need have more than 30 pupils.
- **Reward academic and vocational acievements**. Our new National Qualifications Council will develop a more credit-based course and examination structure for the 19

age group, covering both vocational and academic courses. This will build on a simpler, more flexible National Curriculum and a revised and extended system of National Curriculum levels. Pupils from the age of 14 will study a balanced curriculum around a core of maths, English, science and a foreign language, adding specialisms in academic, vocational or technical courses, some delivered by employers in the workplace. We will ensure that all 19 year olds have a personal tutor and careers advice, helping them build the foundations for personal fulfilment and success.

- **Broaden post-16 education**. We will give all 16-19 year olds in work the equivalent of at least two days a week education or training. Courses will be selected by both the employer and the individual and will be accredited as part of our new 14-19 system. Those studying full-time will study up to three major and two subsidiary subjects, adding work experience, parenting and citizenship to build a baccalaurate-style programme.
- **Improve special educational needs provision**. We will give every LEA a separate Speical Educational Needs service with its own budget for which schools will bid for funding. We will require schools to prepare, for every child with special needs who is not currently covered, an indicative statement to identify needs, set targets and report progress. The service will be monitored by specialists in the local inspection team and in HMI.
- **Enable education for life**. We will give every citizen an entitlement to a period of retraining or education at a time of their choice during their adult lives, based on distance learning costs. We will start by giving this guarantee to those groups most in need, including the long-term unemployed and single parents.

Opening the doors to higher education

Britain's higher education system still provides excellent standards of education, but does so for too few people. Liberal Democrats aim to increase both participation and flexibility in studying for degrees, because not all students want to follow traditional three-year courses. We will:

- **Increase the number of students in higher education** to 2 million by the year 2000. As well as more young people, we will particularly encourage the participation of women, people from minority ethnic and poorer backgrounds, and people with disabilities.
- **Increase flexibility in courses**. We will introduce a credit-based system, enabling students to achieve a diploma after the equivalent of two years, with the option of a further one or two years' study leading to a degree. We will make financial assistance available for part-time study.
- **Open up new opportunities for study**. We will develop distance learning opportunities and extend the franchising of higher education courses so that courses can start at local colleges - helping people who wish or need to study from home.
- **Fund students properly**. We will abolish student loans and restore student entitlement to housing benefit and income support. As our plans for the reform of tax and benefits are implemented, we will establish a Student Income Entitlement and a Student Allowance to which all students, both full- and part-time, will be eligible.
- **Guarantee quality**. Our new Higher Education Standards Council will ensure that as numbers rise, quality does not suffer. We will establish a proper career structure for research fellows and set up a Pay Review Body for academic and non-academic staff to

halt the brain drain.

- **Invest in research**. We will immediately increase the science budget to 0.35% of GDP, and raise it steadily thereafter. We will establish a new Humanities Research Council.

Opening schools to the community. Schools should be seen as a valuable resource, not just for their pupils, but for the communities around them. Access to their libraries, computers, meetings rooms, sports halls, playing fields and swimming pools could make a big contribution to community life.

We will encourage all schools to open up these facilities to local people in the evenings, at week-ends and in school holidays. Some of our proposed expansion of adult education will be organsied in this way. Local authorities - particularly community councils where they exist - will help to provide the administrative support needed to manage such open access.

We will guarantee that Liberal Democrats will increase investment in education by £2 billion in the first year. Our priorities for investment are preschool education, education and training for 16-19 years olds and adult education.

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The Association for Lifelong Learning rejects the common assumption that education equals school, and

- Argues that young people must leave school competent and confident enough to want to go on learning.
- Asserts that in Britain too many do not, and that we cannot afford this waste of time and talent.
- Provides a forum for those interested in lifelong learning to discuss their ideas at conferences, meetings and through publications.
- Acts as an interest group seeking to ensure that educational change incorporates the principle of learning throughout life.

So **A L L** works to . . .

- Achieve a radical but principled reform of compulsory schooling.
- Establish a coherent, comprehensive system of tertiary education after 16.
- Extend information and guidance systems to help people make the best of what is available.
- Ensure wider and more relevant learning opportunities for adults.
- Create financial support systems to help those in need to return to learning.
- Convince politicians and voters that knowledge is the basis of democracy and that lifelong access to it should be a public responsibility and a citizen's right.

Full details of **A L L** aims, membership benefits and subscription rates are available from the Association for Lifelong Learning, c/o Adult Education Department, Nottingham University, Nottingham NG7 2RD.

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SELECTED A R E / A L L PUBLICATIONS

- **Learning for Life: Politics and Progress in Recurrent Education**
  edited by F Molyneux, G Low and G Fowler . . . £8.00

- **Towards a Comparative Methodology: Sharing Practice in Adult Basic Education**
  by J Amox-Jackson and A D McMahon . . . £3.00

- **Research and Practice in Adult Literacy**
  edited by M Hamilton and D Barton . . . £3.00

- **Helping Adults Learn: A Theory of Andragogy**
  by L Martin . . . £2.00

- **Recurrent and Adult Education: Policy or Discipline**
  by C Griffin . . . £1.00

- **Learning to be Green: the Educational Politics of the West German Greens**
  by J Field . . . £1.00

- **The Edinburgh Walk-In Numeracy Centre: the Late 1980s**
  by R Jordinson . . . £1.00

Prices quoted are for A L L members. A full publications list with prices for non-members is available from the Association for Lifelong Learning, c/o Adult Education Department, Nottingham University, Nottingham NG7 2RD.

The aim of this first publication from the Association for Lifelong Learning is to assess the political realities in the early 1990s for lifelong learning. The commitments of the three main political parties are examined as at the April 1992 general election. Richard Hoggart's Foreword is typically incisive, and presents us with the task of educating our political masters in all parties. Frank Molyneux then looks extensively at pre-election policies and promises; John Taylor records how far continuing education featured in the election campaign; and Gerry Fowler reviews education and training provision in a wider context, reflecting on the parties' omissions and differences, and the elements that were overlooked or ignored. The education and training sections of the manifestos of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties are reproduced verbatim in an Appendix.